



State of the City Address Ronald O. Loveridge, Mayor

January 24, 2008
City of Riverside, California

RIVERSIDE IS A 21ST CENTURY CITY

Welcome

Thank you Cindy Roth for hosting this 31st State of the City.

Kudos to California's best Chamber of Commerce.

Riverside has come of age as a 21ST CENTURY CITY. One major reason can be found in the legacy of City Council members. As Mayor, I salute the 16 years of public service represented by Dom Betro, Art Gage, and Ed Adkison. And I welcome Mike Gardner, Rusty Bailey, and Chris Mac Arthur to the work of the Council.

Let me recognize two other exemplary public servants. First, Maxine Frost. Maxine served for nearly 40 years on the Riverside Unified School Board, devoting her life to the best possible K-12 schools. And second, Zach Earp, who is here today. Zach served the Alvord District as a teacher, administrator, 12-year Board member, and this country as a Marine in Viet Nam.

Kudos to Keep Riverside Clean & Beautiful and its past Executive Director, Nancy Melendez, for winning the nation's best affiliate award. And I welcome KRCB's new Director, Connie Librenjak.

Kudos to La Sierra University's SIFE team for winning the national and then world championship. And for the first time, the SIFE team put Riverside on a Kellogg's Corn Flakes box.

Thank you to the community for the many years of support and trust.

And a special thank you to Marsha, my best friend and partner. In 2008, we celebrate 50 years since our first date at the University of the Pacific in Stockton.

Riverside Is A 21st Century City

Every state of the city speech emphasizes good things that have or will happen.

Today, we identify and celebrate extraordinary things that are happening in Riverside.

City Hall

In 2008, City Hall is a striking success story.

The Council, City Manager, and I understand, and practice, shared governance. Our commitment is to improve the economy and to enhance the quality of life.

Together, the City Departments are the best in my 29 years in elected office. Their success is not a hometown claim. Again and again, professional colleagues and associations have applauded the City, comparing our work to the best in the state or country.

In your green bags, there is a handout identifying the widespread recognition received by Riverside in 2007.

The work of the City is done by more than 2,700 employees. Ray Perez is one example of those who deliver City services. Ray began his career in the Solid Waste Division as a Temporary Refuse Driver in 1973. Ray was promoted to a full-time driver in 1974 advancing to his current position of Solid Waste Collector III. He has been a full-time employee with the City almost 34 years.

Ray's dedication to his job is reflected in the exemplary service he provides to our residents. Some interesting facts. Ray has used only seven hours of sick leave in the last 12 years. Ray's accumulated sick leave total is the equivalent of not calling in sick for 26 years. He has not had an accident in his 34 year career. Ray regularly serves on the Solid Waste Division's labor management committee. Meetings are held on Wednesday – his day off. Ray's leadership is a key factor in the Division ranking as one of the highest rated City services. Ray Perez, please stand and be recognized.

Success Stories

This is an extraordinary time in the history of the City. I offer ten highlights.

The first is Riverside Renaissance. It is the most far-reaching initiative in the City's history. It is a "bricks and mortar" plan to build 30 years of capital improvements in five years. As you drive around the City, you will see 42 projects that are completed and 52 under construction. And another 47 projects are in design or out to bid. Riverside Renaissance includes new and improved parks, libraries, roads, electric, water, and sewer systems, arts and culture amenities, and public safety facilities.

Second, we are a university community, with over 50,000 students. UCR – the City's largest employer – has over 17,000 students, with a direct economic impact of over \$900 million. CBU continues to expand both its enrollment and programs, specifically in engineering and nursing. Kudos are in order for their 24/7 approach to welcoming the community. The La Sierra campus is being transformed by Riverwalk projects. We welcome new President, Randal Wisbey. And RCC has opened a much needed parking structure and rehabilitated its famous Quad. Also noteworthy, the City and RCC are building jointly a world class aquatic center.

Let me briefly footnote University Avenue, for in the past it was a dismaying window into the City, a corridor of blight and crime. It is changing, and significantly so – take a look. Last January, the City and UCR hosted, and funded, a University Avenue Charrette. Kudos are in order to the RPD, and especially Lt. Larry Gonzalez, for the significant reduction in crime. Third, Riverside is now the employment center of Riverside County, with over 165,000 jobs. The next highest is Corona, with 63,000. These jobs are increasingly white collar, located in office buildings across the City. Riverside has more office space, 8.4 million square feet, than any city in the Inland Empire – next is Ontario with 3 million. Kudos are in order to the major builders of first class offices; they include Rufus Barkley, Ray Magnon, Mark Rubin, Moshe Silagi, and Rusty Turner.

Fourth, Riverside is a primary Southern California retail center. Excepting Los Angeles and San Diego, Riverside trails only Anaheim, and sometimes Ontario, in sales tax. Retail is alive and well, pick your center. Go to the Plaza, Galleria, Canyon Crest, Mission Grove, or Canyon Crossing. For many years, I have heard, “Why doesn’t Riverside have this or that restaurant?” This past year, at the Galleria, the following restaurants have opened – Cheesecake Factory, P.F. Chang’s, Yard House, and Elephant Bar, with California Pizza Kitchen to follow. Take a look at the pamphlet describing the 25 best restaurants in Riverside; they were selected by the Inland Empire’s best known food critic, Allan Borgen.

A Starbucks story – our Starbucks index in Riverside is 17, and counting. Let me read from the back of a Starbucks cup: “At a Starbucks drive-thru in Riverside, California, a customer spontaneously decided to pay for the drink of the person behind him. That delighted person was then inspired to pay for the drink of the person behind her, who then did likewise. What then transpired was an amazing chain reaction of cheer passing that lasted for seven cars.” Press-Enterprise reporter, Doug Haberman, offered a history and update “. . . three years after it began at a Starbucks in Riverside, the practice of buying coffee for a stranger is still going strong in the Inland region and has spread across the nation.”

Fifth, as to digital government, high tech, and information technology, Riverside now ranks among the top cities in the United States. In close partnership with AT&T, Riverside will have a Wi-Fi network across the City by the end of March 2008. The AT&T Wi-Fi network will be the nation’s largest deployment for both municipal and public use. SmartRiverside Digital Inclusion Program is the best in the country – it offers computers to families earning less than \$45,000; the Program’s goal is to provide computers to over 20,000 families by 2010. On high tech matters, TriTech hosted by RCC provides startup companies with guidance and resources. The Technology CEO Forum continues to meet and grow. And kudos to the success of Surado Solutions, measured by their new office building in the University Research Park.

Sixth is downtown. Riverside’s downtown is becoming a center for arts and culture, conventions, courts, employment, good food, and a town square for all of us. The Mission Inn in 2007 had over 1 million paid customers. My count in downtown is ten white table cloth restaurants – let me welcome to the list Saffron at the Art Museum. Take a ride down Market Street – you see new landscaped medians and parkways, office buildings, housing, retail stores, rehabilitation of the Fox and sites for the Hyatt Place Hotel, Fox Plaza and RCC’s School for the Arts.

Traffic improvements are the seventh. The reconstruction of the 60/91/215 interchange, a major regional choke point, is – more or less – completed! When the project was put out to bid, it was Southern California's most expensive freeway undertaking – current costs are over \$368 million. In addition to the fly overs, when the work is finished, Caltrans will have built 11 bridges, 84 walls, and raised a half-mile section of the 91 Freeway by 30 feet. The interchange moves an estimated 320,000 motorists daily through Riverside.

Many City projects also improved traffic flow in Riverside. The number and scope is impressive, with expenditures of nearly 69 million dollars. By tally, Public Works resurfaced 16 miles of streets, constructed five miles of sidewalks, landscaped 18 miles of medians, implemented traffic improvements at 50 locations, and built the City's first traffic circle.

The eighth highlight is public safety. The City opened three new fire stations and a training center in 2007. We all witnessed the ring of fires surrounding us in Southern California, and we shared a respect for the courage and skill of firefighters as well as the importance of planning and mutual aid.

Crime declined for the second year in Riverside, bucking trends of increasing crime for the large cities in Southern California. The Magnolia Station was opened and the Lincoln Station rehabilitated. The Riverside Police Department is nearly at full strength, competing effectively for police recruits. I carefully read the Chief's Report for 2007; it is a great look at the RPD and the successful implementation of its Strategic Plan.

Ninth, great festivals are one marker of great cities. This year, the Festival of Lights, our signature event, was an extraordinary success. Duane Roberts, Keeper of the Inn, noted that AOL ranked the Festival of Lights as the third most important lighting event in the United States. And especially noteworthy, Good Morning America was broadcast from the Mission Inn, celebrating the Festival of Lights.

Kudos also to many other Riverside festivals held in 2007, including Black History, Dickens, Family Village, Multicultural Youth, Mariachi, and RIFF.

And the 10th is the City's General Plan 2025, adopted in November by the Council. An Executive Summary is in your green bag.

It is an extraordinary smart growth roadmap. The challenge is to be sure it is fully implemented. Every six months the Council will review its implementation steps and in September they will begin a bimonthly review of its 12 planning elements.

Inventing/Defining Riverside's Future in 2008

Every city must continually invent its future – to keep defining what kind of place it wants to be.

2008 offers important opportunities.

Goods movement is the number one public policy issue before Southern California, and Riverside. Nearly 45% of the goods imported into the United States come into Southern

California's two ports. And about 85% of these imports are transported through the Inland Empire by rail or by truck.

For Riverside, our full-court press is funding for grade separations. It is the City's highest legislative priority.

We have 26 railroad crossings. And each day as many as 128 trains go through the City, with gates down up to six hours a day. Nine grade separations are under design, including Magnolia, and Jurupa is under construction.

We need state and federal assistance to help pay for impacts of the goods movement.

A related goods movement issue is the unacceptable noise from DHL cargo planes taking off in early morning hours over the neighborhoods of Canyon Crest, Mission Grove, and Orangecrest. 2008 must be the year when such noise no longer wakes up hundreds of Riverside residents.

Riverside committed itself last February to being a Clean and Green city. By word and deed, we are the leading green city in the Inland Empire. In December, the City Council approved the Clean and Green Sustainable Action Plan. It is time to make the Plan's 38 action steps happen.

I am delighted to announce that Mike Bacich, with Public Utilities, is tasked with translating the Plan's goals into actions, to make Riverside a Clean and Green City.

Kudos are in order: Habitat for Humanity for the first green home built to LEED standards; BIA for their role in what led to the Green Builder Program; and Koll Development for the first green office building in Riverside County, located in the March Meridian Project.

It is time for Riverside to "seize the moment" and take the lead as the City of the Arts in the Inland Empire. In October, the Council made it official. They directed the City Manager to enhance and promote Riverside as the City of the Arts.

Many and varied arts organizations, institutions, and programs make Riverside the best place for arts, culture, and entertainment in the Inland Empire. Downtown arts infrastructure is coming, and coming soon: the Fox Performing Arts Center, UCR's ARTSBlock, and later RCC's School for the Arts. The tally of arts and cultural groups is over 450. Perhaps as many as a million people attend our different venues. The four campuses represent "world class" arts and cultural assets.

City of the Arts can define and strengthen the future of Riverside, both in economic development and in quality of life. As a destination brand – and place, it can attract visitors, engage residents, and help retain talented workers. In an increasingly diverse city, arts can highlight and demonstrate respect and understanding.

Successful branding requires commitment, ingenuity, and hard work. As emphasized in a National League of Cities column, ". . . branding is more than a marketing buzz word of the day. It is more than a tag line or ad campaign. A strong brand is the best of your city. It is a revenue-producing asset. And, trite as it may sound, it is vital to compete and win."

To City Manager Brad Hudson, Arts and Culture Manager Jonathan Yorba, Riverside Arts Council, and Riverside Cultural Consortium, make it happen!

2008 is the year of the Grier Pavilion. On the 7th Floor of City Hall, the outdoor patio is being transformed – and all work will be completed by the end of April. It will be an extraordinary place to gather. And it will be a statement of inclusiveness that will be seen and visited by hundreds of residents.

The Grier Pavilion is named in honor of Jean and Barnett Grier, two early Riverside champions of equal access and justice for all. Eleven other honorees will also be recognized.

More than a ribbon cutting, the opening of the Grier Pavilion should be a time of celebration and reflection for the City. There should be a year-long series of events, perhaps keyed on a Chautauqua format. The stories of inclusiveness should be told, past, present, and future.

Kudos to Sylvia Martin James. Without her tireless efforts and hard work, there would be no Grier Pavilion.

It is time that the City and our two school districts, Alvord and RUSD, forge greater partnerships. A successful city must have successful K-12 schools. All across the country, cities and school districts are working together, and many effectively so. The objective is not control, but rather teamwork and collaboration. To date, the track record of our partnerships is disappointing.

We need dramatic and strategic steps to encourage greater academic success. For example, why not make some form of RCC's highly successful Passport to College an ongoing program for all students in both districts?

We compete for residents as well as for business. One expert explained, "Schools are the center of virtually every residential real estate decision made in America." We need to tell the success stories of our two school districts, and they are many.

Renewal of Social Capital

In 2004, Partners for Livable Communities selected Riverside as one of 30 "Most Livable" cities in America. At the Washington Press Club, when I accepted Riverside's award, social capital was the primary reason I offered for our City's success. Riverside has a rich and long history of civic engagement. It is this social capital that should be sustained and enhanced in the 21st Century.

Social capital as defined by Harvard Political Scientist Robert Putnam centers on connections among people, social networks and the resulting reciprocity and trust. Notably, cities, technology, and life styles are changing, and rapidly so. Making connections in 2008 is different and, in many ways, more difficult.

Successful cities require effective governance, but government alone cannot create successful cities. Civic engagement goes beyond the formal participation process represented by public hearings and city boards and commissions.

The question – how can we encourage current connections and at the same time, spark our civic imagination to discover new ways of connecting that fit our changed lives.

To increase social capital and enhance civic engagement, I recommend the following directions. As Mayor, I pledge my best efforts in 2008 to making them happen. They are a start to what must be an ongoing commitment by the City and the community.

Service clubs are signature statements of social capital. They should be recognized and valued, both for bringing people together and for their many civic projects. Major employers should encourage their management staff to join and participate.

Volunteers should be aggressively sought, both by the City and by community groups. Human Resources recently hired a staff member who is dedicated to recruiting, involving, and thanking City Hall interns and volunteers. And I have asked the Community Relations Coordinator, Yvette Pierre, to work with the Riverside Volunteer Center to encourage and increase volunteer placements.

Neighborhoods are where we live, raise our families, and homes represent our largest personal investment. We need increased attention to our 26 Community Neighborhoods.

Mayor's Night Out, now over 130 visits, will continue. The Council's Community Services and Youth Committee will propose some kind of neighborhood assessment. And I will revisit in 2008 a citywide neighborhood governance approach.

Community of faith is where the City's greatest amount of social capital is found. Riverside is surely distinguished from other larger cities by its extraordinary community of faith. The Peninsula Clergy Network offers one very successful framework to increasing interaction between religious and civic leaders. Riverside should consider doing likewise.

The internet is changing everything we do. It is time that the City looks for ways to enhance civic engagement by using the internet, for example virtual town halls. I will ask Chief Technology Officer, Steve Reneker, to prepare an outline of internet governance initiatives that we could consider.

Youth must be a focus for increased civic engagement. Rusty Bailey, more than any other high school government teacher, has sought to involve students in city matters. I will ask Councilman Bailey to work with the City's Youth Council to prepare a report on what the City, the high schools, and the community may do to enhance the civic engagement of youth in Riverside.

Public Service Announcement – Riverside has been chosen today by the America's Promise Alliance as one of our nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People in 2008.

Seniors also must be a focus for increased civic engagement. Dowell Myers, a nationally renowned USC professor, says the future success of cities will importantly depend on how they engage the boomer generation.

It is vital to build a community in which residents have a sense of purpose, empowerment, and connection to each other. The continued renaissance of Riverside will depend on our social capital and civic engagement.

Bad News – the Economy

While good news is the primary profile of Riverside, the bad news is the economy, and in particular the revenue losses facing the City.

At the State level, the Governor and Legislature are confronting a \$15 billion deficit. No major cuts will be easy.

When asked, John Husing – the Inland Empire's most respected economist – said that 2008 will be a very tough year. This may be the first year since 1964 when the Inland Empire has a net loss of jobs.

For the current City budget, the probable revenue loss adds up to \$10 million. There have been decreases in projected property taxes, sales taxes, development permits, and payments for services. The same outlook, or worse, faces us in next year's budget.

The City Manager is taking decisive steps to reduce expenditures. Most Riverside Renaissance projects will continue, for they are not directly paid by the City's General Fund. Thanks to good management, the city has retained a surplus of over \$46 million, among the highest percentages of any city over 100,000 in California.

The often reported woes of the real estate/housing industry are the primary cause of the economic bad news.

Foreclosures are a fact of life; in 2007 the count within our city limits was 684. Kudos to Rose Mayes and the Riverside Fair Housing Council for their leadership in helping homeowners avoid foreclosure.

There is some good news. Economic experts agree that we are experiencing a short run correction. Economic and population growth will continue to come to Western Riverside County.

Riverside has a highly diverse economic base. We continue to add new retail stores and office buildings – commercial building permits remain very high.

In the time of a down economy, it is even more important to compete, effectively and strategically, for business attraction, retention, and expansion.

Regional/State/National Leadership

2008 is the year for Riverside to step up, to take policy leadership at the regional, state, and national level.

For goods movement, the City must continue to strengthen its advocacy for grade separation funding, at all levels and with all partners, private as well as public. Kudos to Councilmember Steve Adams for his vigorous advocacy efforts for “Operation Free Flow.”

Because of the State budget deficit, the City must take an active role in Sacramento’s decisions impacting Riverside. Most specifically, we cannot accept the Governor’s proposal to close the California Citrus Park. It is a great resource for Riverside, offering an interpretation of our citrus history. It is a spectacular place for indoor meetings and for outdoor gatherings and entertainment. After the Mission Inn, the Citrus Park can be our leading tourist destination. There must be a game plan to keep open and to realize the full promise and purpose of the Citrus Park.

There are two landmark initiatives that may bring important changes to our City and our region. The first is One Water/One Watershed led by the Santa Ana Water Planning Authority. Its purpose is to address water resources in a comprehensive manner. And the second is the Green Valley Initiative led by Ali Sahabi, President and CEO, SE Corporation. It focuses on a sustainable economic development roadmap.

As a member of the South Coast Air Quality Board and a Governor’s appointee to the California Air Resources Board, I am working hard to clean the air in the Basin, and in this inland region. At CARB, we are enacting green house gas rules to lessen global warming – it is an issue on the city, state, national, and world stage.

This November I was elected 2nd Vice President for the National League of Cities. As an NLC officer, I will commit my best efforts to connecting the agenda of Riverside and all cities with the national agenda. In particular I will emphasize the need for investment in the nation’s infrastructure to rebuild America!

Closing

Riverside has come of age in the 21st Century; it is an extraordinary time in the history of the City.

As Mayor, I am excited every day by the many opportunities to make a difference, and to work with others to achieve our future as an exciting, diverse, urban, and successful city.

My thanks to the Council, City Hall, Chamber of Commerce, and all those who make up the social capital, the civic engagement of Riverside.

In the words of Robert Kennedy, “The future is not a gift; it is an achievement. This is the essential challenge of the present.”

Let’s go for it!